

Denewood Learning Centre

Denewood Learning Centre, 113 Forest Road West, Nottingham, NG7 4ES

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The behaviour of a significant number of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, is poor both in and out of lessons. The pupils often show little respect for adults, one another or their environment.
- Staff often physically restrain pupils and forcibly remove them into small isolation rooms. This tends to make matters worse. Staff are frequently sworn at, spat upon and are kicked and punched by pupils.
- The safety of pupils and members of staff is not assured. Pupils say they do not always feel safe in the centre.
- Senior leaders have tried to deal with the poor behaviour but there has been limited impact. During the inspection, many Key Stage 2 pupils were attending part time in an effort to manage challenging behaviour.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusion is high.
- Low attendance has an adverse impact on the academic progress of some pupils. Too few pupils make the rapid progress that is needed to compensate for what they have missed in the past.
- Teaching does not always capture pupils' interest and make them want to learn. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Staff sometimes do too much of the work for the pupils.
- Senior leaders' actions to improve teaching and achievement, and to raise attendance have not had the positive impact that was intended. They have not made sure that staff follow the centre's agreed procedures for use of the isolation rooms.
- The governing body has not checked thoroughly that the centre's arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements. Some health and safety arrangements are inadequate.

The school has the following strengths

- The centre's work has helped some pupils to improve their behaviour, re-engage with learning and return to mainstream school.
- Some teaching is good.
- Teachers and teaching assistants typically manage pupils calmly and sensitively in lessons. This helps most pupils to stay focused on their work and complete tasks.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with no notice.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, visiting some classes more than once. One observation was carried out jointly with the headteacher. They also observed arrival and departure times, break and lunch times, and spent time in corridors and other common areas of the centre.
- Inspectors met with a number of staff including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the coordinator for special educational needs and the centre's business manager. An inspector met with a large group of teachers and support staff. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including information about pupils' attainment and progress; a number of policies and procedures, in particular those related to protecting pupils and keeping them safe; the centre's self-evaluation document and plan for improvement; attendance and exclusion figures; records of incidents; and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work in their books and folders.
- The inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils. They also spoke informally with pupils in lessons and at break and lunch times.
- There were no responses on Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers). The results of a survey of parents' views about pupils' achievement were considered.
- Inspectors took into account the responses on 15 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Linda McGill, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Karen Gannon	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Best	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Denewood Learning Centre caters for pupils from Key Stages 2 and 3 who have been permanently excluded from their mainstream school. It also offers a small number of part-time places to pupils who are at risk of being permanently excluded. The prime aim is to help pupils to rejoin mainstream primary and secondary schools as quickly as possible.
- The majority of the pupils are White British. The remainder come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the population in Nottingham. Almost all of the pupils are boys.
- Over two thirds of the pupils are disadvantaged, a much greater proportion than seen nationally. The centre receives additional funding, known as the pupil premium, to support the education of these pupils.
- The centre receives additional funding for Key Stage 2 pupils for physical education and sport, but does not receive the additional funding for pupils in Year 7 known as 'catch-up' funding.
- The centre does not use any alternative provision for its pupils.
- In February 2013, the centre relocated and now shares the premises used by Unity Learning Centre, a pupil referral unit for students in Key Stage 4. The headteacher leads both centres.
- The number of pupils on roll has increased considerably over the past two years, reflecting an increase in the rate of permanent exclusion across Nottingham.
- The centre is in the early stages of the process of conversion to an academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to increase the progress pupils make and raise their achievement by:
 - supporting teachers to make all lessons as stimulating and interesting as the best, so that pupils want to learn and do not try to leave the classroom
 - making sure that adults do not do the work for the pupils
 - making sure that teachers take account of what pupils have learned already so that their expectations of what pupils should achieve in lessons are high enough, and more-able pupils do not mark time by doing work that is too easy
 - raising pupils' attendance.
- As a matter of urgency, improve pupils' behaviour and the way it is managed so that pupils feel safe by:
 - insisting and checking that staff at all times follow the centre's policy for dealing with inappropriate behaviour
 - substantially reducing the use of physical intervention and restraint
 - ceasing to use the isolation rooms as places of punishment and confinement
 - providing training for staff in effective techniques to deal with unacceptable behaviour and prevent incidents from escalating
 - developing alternative strategies to exclusion and the use of part-time timetables
 - making sure the reports written following incidents are a full and accurate account of what happened
 - analysing incident reports promptly to identify triggers and trends and the lessons that can be learned.
- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - making sure that a full audit of all aspects of the centre's work around safeguarding, and health and

safety is carried out, and that rapid action is taken to deal with omissions and breaches where needed so that all statutory requirements are met

- tightening up the arrangements for checking that staff follow and implement agreed policies and procedures
- seeking and taking account of the views of pupils about their environment and the way they are treated at the centre
- making sure that plans for improvement reflect the centre’s most pressing needs and contain realistic targets.

An external review of governance, including a specific focus on the centre’s use of the pupil premium and the impact of the primary school physical education and sport funding, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have not checked closely enough on how frequently staff are using physical interventions with pupils, how often certain pupils spend time in the isolation rooms and how long they spend there. This means that, far from being a strategy of last resort, restraint and confinement are used frequently as an attempt to deal with poor behaviour.
- The steps taken by senior leaders to try to contain poor behaviour have shown little impact. This leaves staff regularly exposed to physical assault and verbal abuse. Regular disruptions in lessons mean that not all pupils have equal opportunities to learn.
- There are pockets of calm and order, such as within the class for the pupils in Key Stage 3 who are ready to return to mainstream school. However, the atmosphere is tense because the commotion in one part of the centre regularly disturbs pupils elsewhere. Locked doors and restricted access to many areas add to this; pupils' liberty is regularly compromised.
- The school's senior leaders and staff at all levels have a strong commitment to trying to make things work. Staff are loyal to their leaders. They understand and share the aim of improving outcomes for the most vulnerable young people.
- The senior leaders' view of the current situation at the centre is not realistic and underestimates the scale of the problem. The centre's self-evaluation acknowledges that improvements are needed in all aspects of its work, but not that anything is inadequate. As a consequence, the plan for improvement does not focus sharply on the most pressing needs. Targets for attendance and for the quality of teaching are optimistic, given the rate of improvement in the past.
- The leadership structure has recently changed and it is too soon to evaluate the impact of the move from the leadership of subjects to the leadership of phases.
- Senior leaders monitor the performance of teachers and support staff and carry out formal reviews. Some of the targets set for staff are rather general and not readily measurable. Staff were typically happy with the arrangements for their professional development.
- Leaders' analysis of assessment information is superficial and does not lead to a sharp and accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses in the achievement of different groups of pupils. They cannot identify, for example, whether all more-able pupils are making the progress they should or whether disadvantaged pupils are being helped to narrow the gap and catch up with pupils nationally.
- Primary school sport funding was spent last year on specialist sports coaching. This has now ceased. There is no evaluation of the impact of this spending on pupils' fitness and take-up of sport.
- Pupil premium funding was used to provide transport or computer equipment for a number of pupils. This had an impact on improving attendance and achievement for a few. There is no evidence of impact on the achievement of the majority of pupils who were eligible for support through the funding last year.
- The centre's arrangements for safeguarding do not meet statutory requirements. Policies and procedures have not been updated to reflect current guidance.
- Relationships between the centre's senior leaders and the local authority are not positive. The centre's leaders attribute much of the responsibility for the current situation at Denewood to external factors and are insufficiently self-critical. They are struggling to meet the increasing demands placed on them by the growing number of pupils on roll and the complex challenges that some present. The local authority has provided support, including with the proposed change to academy status, and is working with the sponsor to decide on next steps. However, weaknesses in the centre's leadership mean that the local authority's work has not had the intended impact in helping Denewood to deal with its challenges and has not

prevented the decline in its performance.

- The curriculum for younger pupils does not succeed in capturing the interest of many of them. However, the whole-school curriculum rightly emphasises the key aspects that will help pupils reintegrate into mainstream education, understand British values and prepare them for life in modern Britain. It includes basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, and personal, social and health education and citizenship. Classrooms contain displays that set out values such as empathy and tolerance.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an explicit feature of what is taught. As they get older, those pupils who attend regularly respond increasingly positively to this. They are able to move on, either to another school or into Key Stage 4 at Unity Learning Centre, better able to manage their emotions and better disposed towards learning. Pupils who move into Unity Learning Centre are given guidance to help them make informed choices about their next steps with the range of alternative provision that is available.
- Pupils experience enrichment activities away from the centre that they enjoy. Activities like horse riding, climbing and Forest School (a woodland classroom) broaden their horizons and give them the chance of vigorous physical activity.
- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is inadequate. Governors have not made sure that the centre's arrangements for ensuring the safety of pupils and staff are effective, or that statutory requirements are met. Governors were not consulted about the decision to place pupils in Key Stage 2 on part-time timetables.
- The governing body understands its role in holding leaders to account. Minutes of meetings show that members ask increasingly challenging questions and make useful suggestions, for example to request that the centre's self-evaluation takes full account of the criteria used on inspections. Governors have also questioned the fall in the numbers of pupils being reintegrated into mainstream schools.
- Governors' understanding of the quality of teaching relies on reports from senior leaders, which have been over-optimistic. Governors have been involved in making decisions about the pay and progression of teachers and other members of staff, although there is no indication that they have disagreed with or challenged any of the recommendations put before them.
- Governors also look at information about pupils' attainment and progress and receive reports on how pupil premium funding and primary sports funding have been spent. This information is not presented in a way that helps them understand how well different groups of pupils are doing, or whether the outcomes represent good value for money.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate. Too many pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, have little respect for their teachers or each other, and show little inclination to learn. Incidents often escalate into violent behaviour, including physical assault and damage to the centre's property and fabric. This disrupts lessons as other pupils either become distracted and lose attention or attempt to join in. Much learning is lost as many pupils are out of lessons during the course of the day.
- Many pupils have been excluded for short periods since the start of this academic year, most on repeated occasions. The main reasons for exclusion are assault either on staff or on another pupil.
- In contrast, some pupils behave well and have not been excluded. In some classes, pupils concentrate on their work and need minimal intervention or support; they ignore distractions and complete their work. Some of the younger pupils cooperate and take turns when playing games and cope reasonably well when they do not win.
- The pupils themselves say that behaviour is not good. Staff in their questionnaire responses typically agreed with them. Pupils pointed out that there is nowhere for them to go if they need to take a break

because they are feeling angry or upset. If they are able to leave the classroom there is nowhere else to turn as all of the doors are locked and often there are confrontations going on in the corridors. They say this makes it harder for them to deal with their own feelings and exercise self-control.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate. Staff have not made sure that pupils feel safe at school at all times.
- Pupils spoke about their strong dislike of the isolation rooms. They said they feel trapped and claustrophobic while in there, and that they hate being physically restrained. They do not feel safe in such situations.
- Some pupils said that they feared physical intimidation from others. Younger pupils are sometimes reluctant to go out in the playground if older pupils are nearby. In discussion, pupils said that bullying does happen but it is usually physical confrontations rather than via the internet or connected with race or sexuality. The school's records confirm that this is the case. Not many pupils said that they were confident to talk about bullying with an adult.
- Some health and safety procedures do not meet requirements. Staff have not made sure that all fire doors are unlocked and that fire evacuation tests are carried out systematically. Staff have not been properly trained in the administration of prescription drugs to pupils.
- Attendance levels are low and have been so for some time. On the days of this inspection, less than half of the pupils were in the centre. The number of fixed-term exclusions and the use of part-time timetables have exacerbated the situation. Staff check up on a daily basis on the whereabouts of those not in the centre. Efforts to increase attendance have met with success with some individuals, but there has been limited improvement in the overall figure.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Over time, teaching has not had sufficient impact on the learning and progress of pupils in reading, writing or mathematics. Last year, teaching enabled some pupils to make progress and begin to catch up on what is expected for their age, but too many did not. This was the case in all subjects and year groups.
- Pupils commented on variability in the quality of teaching. They know who expects them to work hard and who will give them interesting and challenging tasks to do. They also know where they can get away with doing very little.
- The teaching does not always capture pupils' interest. Pupils with widely differing attainment are sometimes given the same work to do. Instead of adapting the task when it becomes clear that a pupil already has a secure grasp of what is being taught, the pupil is made to continue. Although the task may be completed, little learning has taken place. In these instances, teachers' expectations are not high enough.
- Teachers mark pupils work regularly and give praise for what has been achieved. Teachers usually, but not always, identify next steps and require pupils to complete unfinished work.
- Where learning is most effective, pupils work with some enthusiasm, sustain concentration and complete tasks with little support. They respond readily to the teacher's questions that require them to explain their thinking, to justify their answers or use technical vocabulary.
- Pupils' progress is assessed regularly and charts in classrooms show pupils what they are aiming for. However, assessment information is not pulled together and analysed in a way that helps staff understand the impact of their teaching on different groups of pupils.
- Pupils' attainment in reading is assessed on entry. However, pupils' ability to read using their knowledge

of letters and sounds is not checked. Adults do not fully understand when to use the sounds of letters and when to use letter names when teaching pupils how to spell or read unfamiliar words. Reading ages and comprehension skills are not assessed. This means that pupils' needs are not precisely identified and this slows progress.

- Teachers and teaching assistants typically show patience and understanding and often help pupils to stay focused on their work. Even when confronted with poor behaviour, staff strive to maintain a calm demeanour. However, the frequent use of physical interventions and the removal of pupils to the corridor and isolation rooms show that staff are often unsuccessful in defusing situations.
- Low attendance means that there are sometimes more adults than pupils in classrooms. This can lead to adults doing too much of the work for pupils.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils do not do as well as they should, overall and in different subjects. This is in part because of the variability in the effectiveness of teaching, and in part because of low attendance.
- Many pupils arrive at Denewood with attainment that is below what is expected for their age, typically because of disruption to their education in the past. Most classes include pupils whose attainment varies widely. Too few pupils make the rapid progress over their time at Denewood that is needed to help them catch up on what they have missed. In lessons in a range of subjects during this inspection, pupils' progress was inadequate or required improvement.
- Work in pupils' books is generally well presented and there is little graffiti. However, there is limited evidence of any progress over this term because many pupils have not completed much work.
- The staff have introduced incentives to encourage pupils to read every day. In one class, pupils looked at the *Guinness Book of Records* with some interest, trying to find the most gruesome information that they could. However, the impact of this initiative has not been evaluated and there is no way of gauging whether it has had a positive impact on progress in reading.
- The centre's summary of data shows how many pupils did not make the progress that is expected of them, but not who these pupils were. It does not indicate whether the pupils who did not make expected progress in reading were the same ones who underachieved in mathematics, for example. The progress of girls, looked-after children, pupils from different ethnic groups, disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have additional special needs or the more-able is not analysed. This means that the extent to which different needs are met cannot be evaluated.
- Some individual pupils make sufficient progress in their learning and their personal and social skills so that they are ready to return to mainstream education. The proportion of pupils who are reintegrated into mainstream has fallen over the past three years, in part because not all pupils reach the point where this is appropriate, but also because it is becoming more difficult to find places for them in secondary schools.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	122401
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	449444

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Richards
Headteacher	Wendy Vincent
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2011
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